Clauses 2 and 3 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Title were added to the Bill

SHRI I. D. SWAMI : Madam, I move :

"That the Bill be passed"

The question was put and the motion was adopted.

CLARIFICATIONS ON STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Situation arising out of the on-going strike of truck transporters in the country

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Now, we shall take up clarifications on the statement of the Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways, which was made yesterday. There are three names.

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी (पश्चिमी बंगाल) : क्या हमारा नाम है ?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : नहीं, I am adding no new names, please. If your question is not answered, then you can speak.

PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN-SOZ (Jammu and Kashmir) : Madam, I can assure the hon. Minister, Mr. Khanduri, that I do not hold any brief for truckers. And, it is not for the sake of seeking clarifications I am speaking here. The hon. Minister has come from a very disciplined force. We have worked together in Committees He is an organised person. We are a democratic country. Our methods have to be democratic. I expected more from Mr. Khanduri. Since it has not happened, I am compelled to seek clarifications. For instance, we are not an autocratic country. We have no central authority. Discussion and debate has to remain all the time open in a democracy. That is not happening.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : You should realise that the Minister was a Major General. He is from military.

PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN-SOZ : I want to bring to your notice and the notice of this august House that the first notice from the AIMTC was received on 25th March, 2003. And, it was twenty days later, this strike started and in the intervening period no action was taken by the Ministry. The hon. Minister thought it fit to involve the Civil Servants. We have very capable IAS officers.

We are proud of it. This Service is a piller of the Indian administration. But the jacket of the politicians is a litter wider. Sometimes, the Civil Servants have to operate under compulsions. So, I would wish—in fact, I am wishing retrospectively—the hon. Minister should have called them in and opened a debate. It can happen in an autocratic country that you wish them away. But, in a democratic country, they are the sons of India. They may be cleaners and drivers. but they are part of the Indian society and they deserve respect. On the demands, which the hon. Minister has admitted in the Lok Sabha and, through his statement, here, I would say that they have already agreed on those demands. The hon. Minister has listed the demands on which there is an agreement between the parties. The Government is in agreement with these demands. The other three demands have to be sorted out and agreement may be worked out, if the hon. Minister agrees to it. Even after the strike, it was only on 17th April, 2003, the hon. Minister gave an audience to them.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please, put your questions, अब आप मेहरबानी कर के सवाल पूछेंगे ?

PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN-SOZ : It is not only a question; it is a clarification, I think, despite his ability, the Ministry has gone wrong, the strike continued and people of India suffered. I must tell you about my State where the transportation cost is so high. The price of one litre of petrol, in Delhi, is about Rs. 33 and it will be Rs. 34.50 in Kashmir. Madam, Kashmir has particularly suffered—maybe, the North-East has also suffered. The Ministry should have some mechanism to measure the sufferings of the people. You cannot just go on talking. The talks should result in some concrete settlement. It has not happened. Now, out of ten demands, the hon. Minister has agreed to seven demands. The demands to which the Government has agreed are already in agreement right from the beginning.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Now, please, put your questions. No more speech. Please, put your questions.

PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN-SOZ : Can you listen to me for a minute more?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : No.

PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN-SOZ : Madam, among the three demands, I bring Demand Number 3 to your kind notice. The Demand is, 'Effectively control the overloading and unloading of overloaded goods be made compulsory.' It is in

the interest of our nation that we should not allow overloading and there should be some punishment if there is violation. There should be some discipline. This should have been accepted from the first day of the strike. What is the difficulty in it? Unloading should take place. And, those who violate should be disciplined. So, now, some of the States have done something. Now, the hon. Mininster said that all the States have to be goaded. Who is the guardian at the apex level? You cannot give up your responsibility. You have to ensure discipline in the whole nation. You are the chief. You are sitting at the apex level. You are the co-ordinator. You have to goad to States. You are in touch with the Chief Ministers of the States. But, how long will they go on flouting this? It is a very genuine demand. Out of ten demands, only three have been left out for disposal. You are already in agreement with seven demands. But, I would say that even these three demands are genuine. So. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what he has done and what is he going to do in the foreseeable future to relieve the people of India from this struggle. There is a hike in the prices. There is a shortage of goods. And, some people who produce commodities, they are totally unemployed. (*Time-Bell*) It is suffering. How are you going to alleviate their sufferings?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : I may tell the hon. Members that I don't mind sitting. But I don't want to torture everybody by making them sit here. I can sit whole night. The whole House can seek clarifications. But, we should understand the meaning of clarification. It should not be a speech. It should be a Question. Question means clarification. Now, I call Shri Suresh Pachouri.

श्री सुरेश पचौरी (मध्य प्रदेश) : उपसभापति महोदया, आपके निर्देशानुसार मैं केवल कुछ सवाल आपके जरिए माननीय मंत्री जो से पूछना चाहूंगा। दिनांक 27 अक्तूबर, 1999 को सेक्रेटरी, ट्रांसपोर्ट ने स्वीकारा था कि रोड ट्रांसपोर्ट इंडस्ट्री घोषित होगी। इसके साथ ही यह भी बताया गया था कि टोल चार्जेज के रिव्यू के लिए कमेटी बनाई जाएगी और उसी पत्र में यह भी उल्लेख था कि मिनिमय फ्लोट रेट तीन दिनों के अंदर फिक्स होंगे, लेकिन उस आश्वासन की पूर्ति अभी तक नहीं हो पाई है। अब यह बताया जा रहा है कि यह स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के पावर के अंतर्गत आता है। महोदया, मैं आपके जरिए माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि यदि यह राज्य सरकार से संबंधित बात थी तो सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट के सेक्रेटरी, मिनिस्टरी आफ रोड ट्रांसपोर्ट ने 27 अक्तूबर, 1999 को इस प्रकार का पत्र क्यों लिखा था ?

दूसी बात, महोदया, 4 मार्च 2003 को ऑल इंडिया मोटर ट्रांसपोर्ट कांग्रेस ने अपना रिप्रजेंटेशन दिया और 17 अप्रैल, 2003 को मंत्री जी ने उनके प्रतिनिधि मंडल से बात की। इतनी देरी के क्या कारण थे ? इसके साथ ही स्ट्राइक का जो नोटिस है वह 20 मार्च, 2003 को दे दिया गया था, जबकि माननीय मंत्री जी 17 अप्रैल को बात कर रहे हैं और इस रिप्रजेंटेशन में तीन मिनिस्ट्रीज से संबंधित कुछ मांगे उनकी थी, मगर उन मांगों के संबंध में भी प्रोपर कोर्डिनेशन नहीं हो पाया, जिससे आप किसी नतीजे पर नहीं पहुंच पाए। तो यह प्रोपर कोर्डिनेशन न होने के क्या कारण हैं ?

महोदया, जो ट्रक वाले हैं, एक आंकलन के अनुसार वे लोग 500 करोड़ रुपए प्रतिदिन के नुकसान में हैं। इसके साथ-साथ प्रोडक्शन लोस भी काफी ज्यादा हो रहा है। इस हड़ताल की वजह से जो असेन्सियल कमोडिटीज हैं वह भी लोगों को नहीं मिल पा रही हैं या महंगी मिल रही हैं। इसके लिए सरकार के द्वारा क्या कदम उठाए गए हैं ? यद्यपि माननीय मंत्री जी ने अपने वक्तव्य के आखिरी पैरा में उल्लेख किया है, लेकिन कोई कार्य-योजना गवर्नमेंट की तरफ से नहीं आई है। दिल्ली में और अन्य स्थानों पर लोगों को वेजिटेबल्स नहीं मिल पा रहे हैं, फ्रूट्स नहीं मिल पा रहे हैं, सामान्य उपभोग की चीजें नहीं मिल पा रही हैं, बच्चों के लिए दूध नहीं मिल पा रहा है। इन सब चीजों की उपलब्धता के लिए सरकार की तरफ से क्या कदम उठाए जा रहे हैं ?

महोदया, मैं आपके जरिए माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा कि क्या वे इस प्रकार की कोई एक कमेटी बनाएंगे, जिसमें सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट के नुमाइंदे हों, चूंकि स्टेट गवर्नमेंट से संबंधित कुछ बातें हैं इसलिए उनके नुमाइंदे हों, जो कि इन सब प्रोब्लम्स को देखें, जिसमें टोल टैक्स पर विचार हो सके और जो बर्डन आफ टैक्सेशन का कारण है उस पर भी विचार हो सके ? क्या इस बारे में माननीय मंत्री जी बताएंगे। आखिरी बात मैं यह जानना चाहूंगा कि जब लोगों से रोड टैक्स लिया जा रहा है, सेस ओन डीजल लिया जा रहा है, मेंटीनेन्स फार रोड लिया जा रहा है तो टोल टैक्स की क्या आवश्यकता है ?

महोदया, ट्रक के मालिकों की हड़ताल के कारण काफी लोगों को वेजेज नहीं मिल पा रहे हैं, लोग बेरोजगार होते जा रहे हैं। अब जब गरीब लोग इस हड़ताल से प्रभावित हैं, आम उपभोक्ता प्रभावित हैं जो क्या सरकार हठधर्मिता का रुख त्यागते हुए कोई सामंजस्य का रुख अख्यिार करेगी ? यह भी मैं आपके जरिए, महोदया, माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा।

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Shri S. Viduthalai Virumbi, do you want to seek any clarification?

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu) : Madam, I will directly come to the question. In his statement, the hon. Minister has stated that he is in

touch with the Chief Ministers and the Transport Ministers of various States. I appreciate that. I have questions regarding the points that are yet to be resolved. Sir, regarding diesel prices, the transporters demanded for stability in the market and they demended that it should be made uniform all over the country. But, in your reply you have said that it depends upon the international price of crude, and that it is the market forces which would decide the cost of fuel. But what we want to know is : What is the percentage of international price of crude oil in the retail price? We feel that the percentage of tax is more than the cost of crude oil. I would like to know whether the tax constitutes more percentage than the international price. If the tax is more, then, have you taken that particular situation into consideration while deciding the things? If the tax is more than the cost of fuel, then, I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government would come forward to reduce the tax and see to it that this issue is resolved. This is the first point.

My second point is regarding the abolition of toll tax on four-lane highways and cess on diesel. Cess on diesel is a separate issue and you can talk to them in an amicable manner and come to a settlement. But on the toll tax, you have given the reasons and the purpose for which you have introduced it. But, we want to know whether it is a perpetual toll tax for the four-lane highways, or, whether any new concept is going to be prescribed. Once the entire amount spent for the construction of that particular road is collected, I would like to know whether the toll tax will be stopped from that particular area, or, it will be collected perpetually. If it is going to be collected perpetually, then, it would mean that there would be a problem with the truck operators. What is the stand of Government? I want to know this from the Minister.

The third point is about the Ministry's stand on overloading and other issues. I quote from your statement, "The States have been informed that if they fail to check overloading, this Ministry would be constrained to invoke the provisions of the Central Road Fund Act, 2000, and stop the grant that is being made available to them." Now, I don't want to say that you must intervene, or, you must supervise the State Governments. It is not good in a federal system. But, at the same time, what mechanism do you have to monitor this thing? I would like to know whether the Government has complied with this or not. If there is no such mechanism, then, I want to know whether the Government is going to invent some mechanism for that. This is my third question.

Now, I would put my fourth and last question. I quote from the first paragraph of your speech. "On 7th April, 2003, AIMTC were invited for discussion on their demands. However, they replied *vide* their tax dated " 8th April, 2003, that they would talk only to the Minister etc. and that he would be available only on 13th April, 2003." I want to leave this issue of your not being available on the 13th April, 2003. But in the fax message it was said that they wanted to talk only to the Minister. Does it mean that they met somebody else other than the Minister; other than your good self ? if so, what is the reason behind that? Why did you not come forward to meet them after receiving the first fax message itself? These are the four questions that I wanted to put. I hope the Minister would respond to my queries. Thank you very much.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: My first question to the hon. Minister right now is this. All the consumers and the whole country are worried about this only. When is the strike going to be withdrawn? On which date is it going to be withdrawn? Have you any idea right now? Please inform us if you have any idea. This is the news which the people want, and not the speeches and the questions that we put. This is the first point.

Secondly, who is negotiating from the Government side? Is it the hon. Minister or is it Mr. Pramod Mahajan or is it Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi, as has been reported in the Press? Does it not show a lack of seriousness on the part of the Government that in regard to such a major issue, everyday it is coming in the news that Mr. 'X', is negotiating or Mr. 'Y' is negotiating?

My next point is this. There is the same lack of seriousness on your part, which is not expected of a very efficient Minister like you, Sir, in the last paragraph you have made this point and I quote, "All States have taken adequate steps and it is well-known that in a strike situation some minor hardships would be caused to the citizens". Is it not a very cruel joke to say that some minor hardships are being caused to the citizens of this whole country? Are the hardships that are being caused to the citizens, minor? If your control room or the State control rooms have given such information to you, as a Minister, would you, actually, take action against such control rooms, operators and officials, who have given such wrong information to you? My next question to the hon. Minister, through you, Madam, is this. It is for the Parliament to decide now. Parliament is not another Government Department. But, it really sounds very sad that 24 days have passed. Is the Parliament, another Government

Department? You have taken up the matter with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. What is the Parliament expected to do? Is parliament expected to take your statement, then, take the statement of the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas? The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas will say that takes are more. Madam, about 50 per cent is tax. Fifteen rupees is the cost of the petrol and eighteen rupees is the tax. Now, he will say that the Ministry of Finance is involved here. Madam, I seek your indulgence. For once, a clarification must come as to whether this NDA Government is an individual entity or not. Is this matter being taken up Department-wise? Such a big catastrophe has fallen on this country, there has been a 10 days' Strike. Is it that this whole thing will be passed on to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas? I do not know about the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Some one, who can be made responsible from the Government should be there. Madam, this statement, with all respect to you and with all respect to the hon. Minister, does not have any meaning. Who is going to tell us on behalf of the Government of India—the State Government, the Minsitry of Petroleum or that Ministry? भारत सरकार की तरफ से कोई आकर इसका एक्सप्लेनेशन दे पाएगा कि 20 दिनों से क्या मजाक चल रहा है? You are saying that in regard to diesel price demand, you are in agreement with them, then, what is the problem? If you were in agreement in respect of the seven demands, did you come on the electronic media explaining your stand to the people of this country? To whom will they listen? Who is going to listen to them? Today, what you have discussed, what you are asking, who is going to listen? Who is going to decide it? Is the Government of India serious? Why does the Prime Minister not intervene? Losses amounting to Rs. 500 crores have been incurred. So many problems are there. All the people are suffering. No one is bothered. You are passing it on to the Ministry of Petroleum. The Ministry of Petroleum is passing it on to someone else.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Mukherjee, you have your question. Don't repeat it.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Madam, my question is : will this procedure continue, where one Department will come and say this is now with another Department? Is the Government of India, as it exists today, an individual entity or is it a part of the Department? And, Parliament has also been taken as a part of that Department. Madam, this statement does not have any meaning.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : All right. It is a collective responsibility.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Who is the nodal agency for this Government? They should reply on behalf of the Ministry of Petroleum. Why can't the diesel price be fixed up according to the international price of crude? There should be a transparent price mechanism, and it should be indicated to the whole of this country. Say, if the crude price is $20, this will be the retail price; if the crude price is $30, this will be the retail price. Why can't this Government clarify that? Yesterday also, we asked from the Minister of Petroleum. He was passing it on to the Finance Minister. Why should this joke continue? The Parliament is losing all its relevance. Today, three days have passed, but you have not done anything. स्ट्राइक विदड्रॉ होगी या नहीं होगी ? क्या करना चाहते हैं आप ?

उपसभापति : आप बैठेंगे तो वे जवाब देंगे।

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN (Tamil Nadu) : Madam, this is not an ordinary situation. If the strike continues for long, the country's economic activities will be seriously affected. Everday, the country is incurring huge losses due to this strike. Keeping this in view, why can't the Priome Minister intervene and resolve this crisis and bring the strike to an end, in the interest of the nation?

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal) : Madam, my most of the clarifications have already been sought by the hon. Members. I would just like to ask some relevant clarifications from the hon. Minister. Does the hon. Minister consider that this strike of the truckers is mostly because of the indiscriminate and rampant privatisation bid by this Government? And, after you revoked the administrative price mechanism, an anarchic situation is existing in so far as the prices of diesel and petrol are concerned. Is that the main reason for resentment even with the truckers? I am not holding any brief for the truckers, sorry, but, at the same time, I must reiterate what my friend and colleague, Shri Dipankar Mukherjee has said that you must intimate exactly when this strike is going to be off. That is most important because people are languishing. In fact, I don't like to repeat that there is some minor ailment. It is a very serious situation that is existing throughout the country. So, the country deserves an answer from you, Mr. Khanduri, that exactly when the strike is going to be withdrawn and what exact measures you have taken to alleviate the problems of the people. Thank you very much.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : Madam Deputy Chairperson, I am thankful to the Members for the cross-examination that I have been subjected to. I could start off from what the hon. Members have said, but before that one issue has come up. Dipankarji and Bhattacharyaji wanted to know as to when the strike was going to end, and it is also related to the allegation that I have not been trying to have any dialogue. But I would just like to inform the House, through you, Madam, that there was a meeting going on for four hours, and I came back here because I was required to be here by five o'clock. When I go back, again, there is going to be another meeting. We have discussed quite a few things and I am hoping that when I go back and have another meeting, things would probably be resolved. This is my hope. Therefore, in reply to the question as to when the strike would end, I can only say that I hope it will end soon. When I go back, after our discussions, whatever we have discussed for four hours .. .(*Interruptions*) ...

श्री खान गुफ़रान ज़ाहिदी (उत्तर प्रदेश) : कितनी मीटिंग होंगी ...(*व्यवधान*)

उपसभापति : जवाब तो देने दीजिए, मीटिंग तो करनी पड़ेगी। हम भी तो मीटिंग कर रहे हैं। ...(*Interruptions*)...

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : No; I am surprised, Madam, that people want to know as to when the strike would end. I cannot decide about it alone. I am only telling you about certain things but the other side is also there. We have a discussion. They have gone back to their people. When I go back, they would come back with the feedback. The impression that I get is, probably, we might come to some conclusion. But it is not a one-sided decision, and, therefore, I am unable to say as to when it will end. It may end today, tomorrow or day-after-tomorrow or anytime. My effort has all along been that is should end quickly.

Now, coming to the specific point of Prof. Soz—I think, he has gone away as he had some work—that we are not meeting, I would like to say that first seven demands came, and then it was revised to ten demands. Actually, we have got their list of demands from the 4th of April. We immediately started a dialogue, which I had tried to explain in my statement. All that I would like to submit is this. Here are many experienced Members who had been Ministers in the earlier Governments, and they know that when such things come up, certain amount of ground work has to be done. If I straightway sit with the people, and start

talking, I think, it will not be a meaningful dialogue. It will be just exchange of views. Therefore, some ground work on the demand had to be done. This was done. As I had also stated, it had started at their official level and at our official level. From 7th onward, this dialogue was started. ...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : इसमें एक महीना लगा।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : इतना जुल्म क्यों कर रहे हैं, साहब, आप सुन लीजिए।

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : स्ट्राइकर्स के साथ बात करने में आपने केज्युअली लिया है। देश की इकॉनोमी प्रभावित हुई है; 7-8 करोड़ लोगों को वेजेज नहीं मिल पाया है। इस स्ट्राइक को हुए इतना समय हो गया है और आपने उनसे बात करने में, ग्राउंड वर्क करने में एक महीना लगा दिया। 20 मार्च, 2003 को उन्होंने स्ट्राइक का नोटिस दिया और 17 अप्रैल को आप मिल रहे हैं। यह मैं आपसे विनम्रतापूर्वक बड़े अदब के साथ पूछना चाहता हूं।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : ठीक है, यह जो मैंने आपको यहां पर लिख कर दिया है, इनकी पहली डिमांड हमको 25 मार्च को मिली। उसके बाद जब बात हुई तो उन्होंने अपनी और डिमांड दी जो 4 अप्रैल को मिली तब 4 अप्रैल से एक महीना कहां लगा रहे हैं। ...(*व्यवधान*) मैं आपको लिख कर दे रहा हूं, यहाँ पर लिखा हुआ है इसको कृपया पढ़िए।

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : स्ट्राइकर्स ने नोटिस 20 मार्च को दिया।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : 20 मार्च को दिया और हमको 25 मार्च को मिला तो क्या मैं उनसे 20 मार्च से बात करना शुरु कर दूं ? आप कृपया समझिए, आप तो गवर्नमेंट में रह चुके हैं। एक प्रक्रिया चलती है और मैं नई प्रक्रिया ...(*व्यवधान*)

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : मुझे लगता है कि इसी टोन में आप अगर उनसे बात करते होंगे तो क्या हाल होगा।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : अब आप रनिंग कमेंट्री करते रहेंगे तो....

उपसभापति : आप बोलिए। आप जरा सुन तो लीजिए, पूरी बात सुन लीजिए।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : इसलिए 7 तारीख को जब उनसे कहा गया, यहां पर विरुम्भी जी ने वह बात उठाई है, उसके बाद उन्होंने कहा कि अभी आपस में बातचीत चल रही है। तो उन्होंने कहा कि हम मंत्री जी से बात करना चाहते हैं। हमने उनसे कहा

बत २५ कि कहां है ? तो उन लोगों ने कहा कि हमारे अध्यक्ष उपलब्ध नहीं हैं। 13 को उपलब्ध होंगे और इसलिए 14 को स्ट्राइक शुरु हुई थी। उसके बाद एक-दो दिन अवश्य लगे हैं बातचीत करने में और फिर मैंने उनके साथ बात की है और यह पूरी जो 7 बातों पर सहमति हुई है उस दिन उनको बताया गया। यहां पर यह भी एक बात आई कि हमने इलेक्ट्रोनिक मीडिया से क्या किया तथा बताया गया कि सूचना जनता को नहीं है। In this connection, I would like to say that we had issued an advertisement in which I had listed out all the demands, and what exactly our response is. I presume, hon. Members have read it. To whatever question was put to me on the television, I have been saying this. With regard to the seven demands, we had said that there was no difference of opinion between us, and, therefore, we could proceed on that line. Three demands were there. One was about over-loading, the other was about the cost of diesel, and the third was about the toll. We have said that as far as demand regarding toll is concerned, it is not negotiable. We have said that we cannot remove it. They wanted to remove it, and put it as a cess on the diesel itslef. So, we saw no justification in this. Therefore, I told them that we could discuss the other two demands. I am also being charged and Dipankarji was very agitated that we are passing over the responsibility. But I would like to submit on what I have conveyed here that I was in toch with them and was getting the feedback from them. I was the nodal authority on this. I am responsible. As one hon. Member said, "Delay is there", I am responsible; nobody else is responsible. It is my Ministry; I am responsible.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Why was Shri Pramod Mahajan negotiating? Why was Shri Murli Manohar Joshi negotiating?

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : I come to that also. I was the nodal authority for this. You have to understand that if, not tomorrow, the cost structure is to be worked out, I have no authority to do the cost structure of the Ministry of Petroleum, just as the Petroleum Ministry has no jurisdiction to talk about our Ministry levying toll. Therefore, every Ministry has its own jurisdiction. But in this case, I was the coordinator. I was talking to the States; I was talking to the Chief Ministers; I was talking to the Transport Ministers to get feedback from them. You would also underestand the limitation that whatever feedback I gave, that was from my source of information. I do not have the information as to what is the situation of perishables in a particular State. I have been speaking to them. Based on their feedback, I have tried to say here—maybe sometimes, I accept

that minor things should not have been there. Whatever information we got, I have no reason to distort the same, and, therefore, we are trying to get information from them.

Now coming to the specific point of Shri Pachouri about some letter of 27th October, which may Secretary had written, at that time, after 1999 and here the issue was that they wanted the truck industry to be given the status of 'industry.' I had, personally, after becoming the Minister taken up this matter with the Finance Minister and a considerable amount of discussion took place. Eventually, the point boiled down that what benefit would truck industry get if they are made into an industry. There were not much differences. I came back to them. I personally discussed with them. I said, "If you tell me some specific additional benefits, you are going to get, you will get them." Today, we have also discussed it. I have again told the same thing. You please convince us that you are going to get some additional benefits; otherwise, just putting you on the list of industry is not going to help. Therefore, I had taken up that issue. On the question of coordination between Ministries, I said, "I will deal and coordinate."

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : मैडम, मैं आपकी इजाजत से कहना चाहता हूं, क्योंकि माननीय मंत्री जी ने अशोक जोशी जी, जो परिवहन मंत्री हैं, के 27 अक्तूबर 99 के लैटर का जिक्र किया। मेरे पास उसकी एक कॉपी है। उसमें कलैक्शन ऑफ टोल टैक्स चार्जिज़ के बारे में उन्होंने कहा है कि उसके रिव्यू के लिए कमेटी बनाई जाएगी। अभी तक कमेटी नहीं बनाई गयी है। ''इसको इंडस्ट्री का दर्जा दिया जाएगा''—वहां इंडस्ट्री का दर्जा नहीं दिया गया है। फिर आगे मिनिमम फ्रेट रेट्स के बारे में उन्होंने कहा है कि तीस दिनों के अंदर हो जाएंगे। उन प्वाइंट्स का भी कृपया उत्तर दीजिए।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : आप मुझे वहां तक पहुंचने तो दीजिए, तभी मैं बोलूंगा।

उपसभापति : अब आप स्ट्राइक कर रहे हैं, रोड ब्लॉक कर रहे हैं। कैसे उनकी गाड़ी चलेगी ?

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : मैं आपसे निवेदन कर रहा हूं कि जिस सीक्वेंस में आपने बोला है, मैंने वही नोट किया है और उसी सीक्वेंस में मैं चल रहा हूं, इस चिट्ठी के सीक्वेंस में मैं नहीं जा रहा हूं। आपने कहा है कि टोल के लिए कमेटी नहीं बनाई गई। जो टोल है, यह जो चार लेन के हाइवेज़ पर टोल लगाना शुरू हुआ है, जो नया सिस्टम बना है, इसके ऊपर

जो टोल का रेट हम चार्ज कर रहे हैं, वह 1997 में जो रेट्स फिक्स हुए थे, जैसे कि प्रति किलोमीटर कार के लिए 40 पैसे, एलसीवी के लिए 70 पैसे, ट्रक्स के लिए 1 रुपये 40 पैसे और हैवी वहीकल्स के लिए 2 रुपये 40 पैसे, इस प्रकार जो रेट था, वही हमने कॉन्टीन्यू किया है। इसके ऊपर कमेटी बननी थी, और उसको रिव्यू करना था, इस प्रकार की जो बात आपने उठायी है, आज ही उस पर चर्चा हुई है और आज हमने उनको यह कहा है कि इस प्रकार की कमेटी हम दुबारा बनाएंगे— इसलिए नहीं कि टोल लगना चाहिए या नहीं लगना चाहिए बल्कि इसलिए कि कितना उसका जस्टीफिकेशन है, कितना लगना चाहिए। क्योंकि टोल जहां तक लगना है, मैंने अपने वक्तव्य में भी कहा है कि टोल हमारी राय में यूजर फी है जो कि लगनी चाहिए क्योंकि ट्रकर्स को और आम जनता को बैनिफिट हो रहा है। एक इन्होंने कहा कि हमने फिक्सिंग ऑफ रेट्स के संबंध में कहा है। उसमें हमने यह कहा है, उस समय जो लिखा गया है, "Keeping in view the strong demand and agitation, the hon. Minister has agreed to request States to initiate necessary steps for fixing a minimum freight rates. We had requested them. Now, as per the Motor Vehicles Act, it is the total authority of the State to lay down the rates fixed or do not fix them." Therefore, we can only request them, which had been requested. Beyond that, I do not think anything could have been done. Shri Virumbi said about tax. He said that it was more. As I told yesterday, there was a discussion here. Customs duty, or, excise duty is more, that is an issue by itself. I don't think, I well be able to comment on that.

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी : आपकी सरकार है, सात के बाद वापस जाकर क्या बोलेंगे ? वहां जाकर बोलेंगे कि मंत्री को बोला है। ...*(व्यवधान)*.. आज पन्द्रह दिन से हमारे ...*(व्यवधान)*.. I know that you are inefficient. I know that the Government does not have confidence in you also. That is what I was telling. After one day of negotiation, Shri Pramod Mahajan is negotiating. Then Shri Murli Manohar Joshi is negotiating. In whosoever the Government has confidence, let him come and explain to us.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Dipankar, let him answer.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : क्या बोलेंगे साहब, He is helpless. I understand his problem.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B. C. KHANDURI : Please, listen to me. I was relating to your observation about the cost structure. I am not relating to the truckers' complaint. The truckers' complaint was that the price of diesel should be reduced in relation to the international market. On that issue, we had gone to them and

discussion has taken place; decision still has to come. I have to coordinate, I have ....(*Interruptions*)...

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी : यह सरकार की जिम्मेदारी है।...(*व्यवधान*)...25 दिन से साहब को मालूम है।...(*व्यवधान*)...

उपसभापति : ये सरकार हैं ना।

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी : सरकार ने बताया क्यों नहीं, डीजल के प्राइज के बारे में।...(*व्यवधान*) खर्चा क्यों नहीं हुआ।

उपसभापति : ये बात कर रहे हैं। ऐसे थोड़े ही बता देंगे। बैठिए, बैठिए। आपको मालूम है, प्लीज।

श्री दीपांकर मुखर्जी : ये क्यों नहीं हुआ ? ....unless I talk to the Finance Minister.

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : ये जो बात है, इस ट्रकर्स के स्ट्राइक के बारे में जो प्वाइंट है, उनके बारे में मैं कह रहा हूं। आपने एक एडिशनल प्वांइट बताया था। ये जो कास्ट स्ट्रक्चर है, this cost structure cannot be decided by me or even by him. It has to be decided by various agencies in the Ministry or in the Coimmittee. ...(*Interruptions*)...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Dipankar Mukherjee, you are not understanding something. एक मिनट, मैं आपको समझाऊं कि क्या समस्या है ? He is in-charge of the Transport Ministry. The diesel, which is used by the trucks and the transport people, is governed by the Ministry of Petroleum. Then, there are certain ...(*Interruptions*)... You understand...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Madam, I happen to be the Chairman of the Committee of Transport; I happen to be the Convenor of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Petroleum...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Then you should know more than I know.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Yes, Madam, I know. That is why, I am charging this Government of not taking the matter seriously. It is not for Mr. Khanduri to reply to this economic crisis that we have. It should have been either the Prime Minister or the Finance Minister to say on this issue of distress, as to whether the diesel prices can be made transparent or not. If today he cannot reply, when is the reply on the price of diesel going to come?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Please, listen to what he is saying. Just have patience. What is he trying to say is that he is the interlocutor. Somebody has to coordinate among various ministries, and that is what he is doing. Let him answer ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal) : Madam, will you allow me just one minute? I think we also have a little understanding of what is happening. And that is our grouse that there is no proper authority in the Government of India who can prevail over all these three Ministries and come to a conclusion, and speak authoritatively on the bone of contention between the Government on the one hand, and the truckers on the other. And, therefore, we are perfectly in a position to understand and also, appreciate the predicament of Gen. Khanduri.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B. C. KHANDURI : You are being very kind to me.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU : But, at the same time, on 20th March, the strike notice has been served and today is 23rd April. Since the strike began, Rs. 500 crores are being lost every day, and because of the kind of hardships that people are facing, naturally, Parliament is agitated. Therefore, we think that this is ample testimony of the callousness of this Government.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Okay, let him answer now. He followed what you mean.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B. C. KHANDURI : I am thankful to Shri Nilotpal Basu for sparing me with this. But I take full responsibility; I am coordinating, whether it is with the Finance Ministry ...(*Interruptions*) ... Just a minute, please. You can blame me for not coordinating. It is my duty to coordinate ...(*Interruptions*)...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Okay, now let him speak.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B. C. KHANDURI : I have tried to coordinate with some other Ministries. I have tried to coordinate with the Finance Ministry ...(*Interruptions*)....

उपसभापति : प्लीज आप बैठिए। Let him finish his sentence, at least

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B. C. KHANDURI : And, therefore, it is not proper to say that nobody is coordinating. It is my responsibility. If I have failed in that, then I am to blame. But the point is that coordination was done on the issues, which have been raised. Now, they have demanded withdrawal of the proposed cess of 50 paise per litre of diesel. Diesel prices have been stabilised. It is on this,

not the price structure; the price structure is not an issue. Therefore, I would request you to kindly understand that. Now, on the question of taxes asked by Shri Virumbi, as I said, the tax issue, the whole cost structure, has to be seen by them. His second question pertained to toll on four lanes and whether it was perpetual. Now, this toll that is being collected, I would prefer to call it user-free. This issue was discussed for 45 minutes in this House on one day during the Question Hour. This toll is going to be perpetual because today, what we are spending on these roads is Rs. 3 to 5 crores per kilometre. And even if you were to say that when the cost is taken, it will take 100 years; this cost will never be recovered through the toll tax. You say, 'perpetuity' or you say 'till the cost is recovered'; it is going to be almost the same.

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : उपसभापति महोदया, टैक्सेशन को रिव्यू करने के लिए, हाई टैक्सेशन की वजह से ऑपरेटिंग कोस्ट और फ्रेट के रेट में जो काफी फर्क आ रहा है, इसे रिव्यू करने के लिए क्या आप कंसीडर करेंगे ? कमेटी बनाएंगे ? हमें एक्चुअली में वह आन्सर चाहिए। ये जो आप दरियादिली दिखा रहे हैं, जो सबका किया हुआ है उसे अपने ऊपर ले रहे हैं इसके संबंध में मैं आपसे गुजारिश करना चाहता हूं कि ट्रक ऑपरेटर्स की हड़ताल की वजह से जो आम लोग प्रभावित हो रहे हैं, गरीब लोग प्रभावित हो रहे हैं, उपयोग की वस्तुएं नहीं मिल पा रही हैं, उस संबंध में हमें बताइए कि कितने समय में यह ट्रक हड़ताल समाप्त होगी ? उनके द्वारा जो मांग की गई हैं उन मांगों की पूर्ति के लिए बताएं ? यह बताएं कि वह कमेटी कब तक बनाएंगे ? हाई टेक्सेशन रिव्यू के लिए क्या करेंगे यह बताएं। तब तो यहां बैठने का फायदा है, नहीं तो केवल आपका वक्तव्य सुनें तो इससे तो कोई अर्थ नहीं निकलने वाला है।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : पचौरी जी, मैंने आपका वक्तव्य शांति से सुना लेकिन आप मुझे शांति से नहीं बोलने दे रहे हैं।

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : क्या ?

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : मैंने आपकी बात शांति से सुनी है लेकिन आप अशांति में मुझे कुछ बोलने नहीं दे रहे हैं।

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : नहीं, ऐसा नहीं है।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : देखिए, यहां जो दस डिमाण्ड्स एडवरटाइज में लिखी गई हैं, उनके संबंध में चर्चा कर रहा हूं, लेकिन अगर आप कोई नई बात ला रहे हैं तो मैं उसका जवाब नहीं दे सकता हूं।

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : पुरानी बात है।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : पुरानी बात है तो इन दस मांगों के संबंध में मैं अपना जवाब दे रहा हूं। आपने कहा है कि ओवर लोड की बात है। विरुम्भी जी ने कहा है कि What mechanism do you have ? Overloading is an offence as per the Motor Vehicles Act, Section 114. I have written to the Chief Ministers a number of times that this should not be done. On the 16th of January we had a meeting of the Transport Development Council here, in which all the Transport Ministers were present. And the AIMTC was not on strike then. Their President, their Secretary-General, all the people were also present, and there, I had, again, made it clear that this must be stopped by 31st March; otherwise we would start taking some action. Before that strike, some cases came to our notice. As I have written here, we have taken this action, what is within my power to stop some of their grant, which they have got. It is not affecting some other States because, propably, they are getting from the truckers much more. We are only to get in touch with.....

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : मैडम, माननीय मंत्री जी बहुत ही वेग आन्सर, गैर जिम्मेदाराना आन्सर दे रहे हैं। जिस ढंग से सरकार इसे कैजुअल ले रही है उसी ढंग से ये जवाब दे रहे हैं इसलिए हम उनसे सैटिसफाइड न होते हुए बहिष्कार करते हैं।

मेजर जनरल (सेवानिवृत्त) भुवन चन्द्र खंडूड़ी : आपको कहीं जाना होगा।

श्री सुरेश पचौरी : किसी चीज का जवाब नहीं है।

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Madam, he is not the Minister concerned. I have high regard for him. ...*(Interruptions)*... The situation is such that someone who has been given more authority and delegation should have come and clarified the points.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : It is not fair. The Chair cannot walk out; the Members can!

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Madam, I am telling this to the hon. Minister. "You can't take the responsibility. Don't take this responsibility." The Government should specifically....*(Interruptions)*.... No, there is nothing to be laughed at. ...*(Interruptions)*... What are you going to do? What are you going to tell other outside?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Everybody makes his speech and walks out!

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE : Madam, we are also walking out.

(At this stage, some hon. Members left the Chamber.)

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : I have already explained about overloading. Mr. Dipankar Mukherjee who is going away talked about.....*(Interruptions)*.....

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : You need not reply to the points of those who are not here. You clarify the points raised by Mr. Virumbi and Mr. Narayanan.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : As regards Mr. Virumbi's questions, I have already replied to them. Mr. Narayanan has put one question.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : About the Prime Minister.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : You see the point. I would very humbly submit that I would go to the Prime Minister when I feel that there is some decision required at his level. If I am able to coordinate with the Petroleum Minister, and he is giving me positive response, if I am able to coordinate with the Finance Minister, and he is giving me positive response, with regard to the assurance, then why should I bother the Prime Minister ? It is not fair to the Prime Minister. Therefore, we have done it, and I am quite sure, as I have said now, we have had a four-hour discussion today with these people. I am going back again. They are waiting for me. We will have another discussion, and, hopefully, it will be resolved. Thank you, Madam.

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI : We also hope that it would be resolved.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Mr. Khanduri, we wish you all the best.

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI : Thank you, Madam. I need your good wishes.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : You should be successful in your mission, in cancelling the strike or in getting the matters solved. With these good wishes to you, I adjourn the House till 11 o'clock tomorrow

The House then adjourned at fifty-five minutes past six of the clock, till eleven of the clock on Thursday, the 24th April, 2003.

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